



Making Tracks
Missouri Department of Conservation
2360 Hwy D
St. Charles, MO 63304
www.conservation.state.mo.us

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August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area
Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center
Rockwoods Reservation



Making Tracks

February 2002 Volume 02, Number 02

A naturalist never knows what will show up on his or her desk, or whether it'll be dead or alive. So, after reading the attached query, I opened the bag with caution. Well, the aroma was not offensive. (You should have smelled the fungi that sat in an airtight bag, on my desk, for an entire weekend.)

At first, being detached from its former environment made this surreal cross between a tent caterpillar's shelter and an oriole's nest unfamiliar. Then, it dawned on me. Webworms! After hatching during the summer and before crawling away to pupate, the fall webworm moth caterpillar weaves and eats its way around the ends of tree or shrub branches leaving behind a webbed conglomeration of leaf skeletons, feces and molts which often lasts into the winter.

Webworms are not the only insects of which we find evidence during the winter. Hundreds of insects like wasps and flies lay their eggs on different host plants and trees. (The most common host is the oak tree.) The plant or tree responds by forming a sort of scar tissue or deformity called a gall which, during the winter, protects the eggs. Galls come in numerous shapes, colors, sizes and textures. Some are oval, pink, fuzzy and about the size of a pea. Some are round, smooth, tan and the size of ping-pong balls.

Thankfully, invertebrate shelters are not the only remnants left to ponder during cold months. In fact, winter is an excellent time of year during which numerous natural wonders can be explored. Take animal tracks for instance. In fact, snow (or mud) provides an excellent medium from which clues are gathered.

First, look for clear individual tracks. How many toes does the animal have? Is the animal a plantigrade walking on its entire foot? Or, is the animal a digitigrade walking on its toes? If the tracks are not clear, follow the trail to determine what the animal's pattern is. How long is the stride? How wide is the straddle? Also, be observant of other signs. What materials are visible in nearby feces? What other clues do you see?

Animal footprints are not the only items worthy of investigation. After the leaves have long fallen, browse (food) is also much more apparent. For example, during snowy or icy weather when green vegetation is not available, rabbits and deer will feed on woody twig tips leaving two very different marks. Because cottontails have two pair of incisors (front teeth) on the upper jaw and one pair on the lower jaw, they are able to "nip" the twig end leaving a clean 45-degree-angle cut. White-tails, on the other hand, have no upper incisors. They grasp the twig, jerking their heads up and away, leaving behind a ragged end.

In addition to tracks, browse and a myriad of other animal signs which are rendered conspicuous by Missouri's winter, there are always holes in the ground. As common as they are and as boring as they may sound, there is fun in discovering who made a particular hole and who its current resident is.

Many Missouri mammals, from shrews to black bear, dig or use dens. When identifying burrows, size and habitat are the first considerations. Chipmunk holes, for example, are about two inches in diameter with no signs of excavation and

are usually located in or near woods. Groundhog burrow entrances, on the other hand, are about six inches in diameter with a mound of dirt in front of the hole and are located away from water. Fox dens, commonly, are abandoned groundhog burrows that the canid has renovated by increasing the size of the entrance several inches. The list goes on.

If you're lucky, you'll have an experienced companion to learn from and share a long list of discoveries with. Or, maybe you're the experienced companion. Either way, there are plenty of books and field guides available at your local library and Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center to aid your investigation during the cold, invigorating days of February. Exercise your curiosity. Get outside and enjoy!



Making Tracks

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Volunteer Milestones

*Thanks for all your
effort and help!*

Powder Valley Nature Center

Dick Wasson.....3300 hours
Neva Wasson.....3300 hours
Joan Hummel.....2800 hours
Ed Witte.....2000 hours
Joan Stokes.....600 hours
Charlie Gentry.....400 hours
Shirley Pearlstone.....400 hours
Linda Hibbitts.....200 hours
Cheryl Rafert.....200 hours
Marlene Ahrens.....200 hours

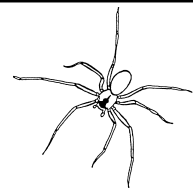
Busch Conservation Area

Doug Robb.....700 hours
Gladys Kullman...1400 hours

Rockwoods Reservation

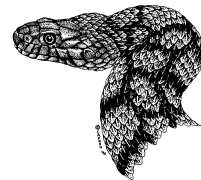
Ron Box.....300 hours
Jan Catanis.....600 hours
Mary Demmitt.....600 hours
Robin Gavlick.....800 hours
Glenda Myers.....1600 hours

News from Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center



POISONOUS THINGS Scout Discovery Table


Saturday, February 3, 2002
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.



Attention, Scouts! What's the difference between the terms "venomous" and "poisonous?" How many different kinds of venomous snakes make Missouri their home? How can you identify poison ivy? What poisonous spider has a "fiddle" on its back?

Learn the answers to these questions and more by visiting the Poisonous Things Scout Discovery Table at Powder Valley. This table is specially designed to help certain scouts accomplish parts of specific badges. "Poisonous Things" applies to: Junior Girl Scouts' "Let's Get Outdoors: Wildlife #5" and "Plants and Animals #9"; Wolves' "Outdoor Adventure (Elective 18g)", and Webelos' "Outdoor Group: Naturalist #6."

Here's your chance to have fun, learn something and work on that badge!

No reservations required. 

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center Nature Films

February 2 & 3

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Magic School Bus: Hops Home The Rotten Truth
11:00 a.m. - Noon & 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
America's Outdoor Heritage; Watching Wildlife

February 9 & 10

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Critter Rock; Bugz
11:00 a.m. - Noon & 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Natural Adventures Close to Home: St Louis
Outdoor Education/Kids & Conservation IV

February 16 & 17

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Eyewitness: Mammal; I Dig Fossils
11:00 a.m. - Noon & 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Fishing II; Profiles II

Sorry, There Will Be No Films On February 23 February 24

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
My First Nature Video; Special Report: You Can Make a
Difference
11:00 a.m. - Noon & 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Forests: More Than Trees; Watchable Wildlife

Shown in Auditorium-Free of Charge-Groups Welcome!

Children's: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday
All Ages: 11:00 a.m. - Noon & 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday
Films and dates are subject to change.
Please call Powder Valley for up-to-date information.
No Reservations Required

Powder Valley Gift Shop

Set 3 in our
Lewis & Clark
Collection Card Series
is now available
Price: \$3.85



Spring Fishing Festival

Wednesday, February 13, 2002
7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center and Missouri Smallmouth Bass Alliance invite you to come and spend an evening with Dan Gapen. He will be speaking on many things, including lake/stream layouts and where small-mouth bass prefer to hang out. There will be numerous brochures of interest available.

*Please call (314) 301-1500
beginning January 30 for a reservation.*



11715 Cragwold Road
Kirkwood, MO 63122
(314) 301 - 1500

LOCATION:

From I-44 east in Kirkwood, take Watson Road, exit and turn north on Geyer Road. Follow Geyer Road 200 yards to Cragwold Road. Go 1 mile west on Cragwold Road.

AREA HOURS:

Daylight Savings Time:
8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Central Standard Time:
8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

NATURE CENTER HOURS:

Open all year, 7 days a week,
from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

GIFT SHOP HOURS:

Open all year, 7 days a week,
from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ABOUT THE AREA:

112 acres of forestland and winding creeks, three hiking trails (one wheelchair accessible). Open to visitors free of charge.



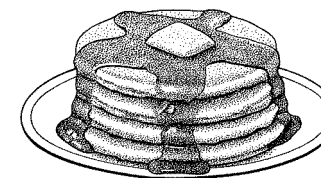
The Educators' Niche

by Barb Sandhagen, Education Program Coordinator

A Breakfast Tale

It's a bright sunny winter morning. You feel the warmth from the fire blazing in the fireplace. The savory smell of bacon frying wafts through the air. Just then you hear the first buttermilk pancake sizzle on the hot griddle! The telltale bubbles tell you it's time to flip the pancake you've carefully made from your grandmother's "hand-me-down" recipe. The coffee is ready, the bacon awaits. The first drop of syrup is about to hit your melting butter pile on top of the golden brown pancakes. But, WAIT. . . just as that drop meets the top pancake, your eye catches words on the label like, "potassium sorbate, high fructose corn syrup, caramel color, cellulose gum and natural and artificial flavors."

You've gone to all the trouble to make sure everything is just right! Great homemade pancakes, bacon cooked to perfection, butter instead of margarine, fresh brewed coffee from beans ground just that morning. Wouldn't you rather see the words "Pure Maple Syrup, No Additives or Preservatives" on the label??




If you've never tried "the real thing," it's time to give it a try! It's hard to describe the "yum" your taste buds will experience when you try "real maple syrup" on homemade pancakes. You'll find that even though you may pay more for pure maple syrup, once you've tried it, it will be difficult to return to the brown colored corn syrup.

Did you know?

It takes at least 40
gallons of tree sap
to make **one** gallon
of syrup!

You probably associate anything to do with maple syrup with states like Vermont or Maine. Did you know that right here in your own "backyard" you can sample the flavors of the forest? Would you like to learn the process of maple sugaring and see if you can do it at your school or at home?

All you need to do is call David Bruns, Conservation Education Consultant, at (636) 458-2236. Tell him you would like to sign up for a Teacher and Youth Leader Workshop on February 6 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Rockwoods Reservation to experience Maple Sugaring "Missouri style!" 

Teacher & Youth Leader Workshop



Maple Sugaring 2002

Rockwoods Reservation
Wednesday, February 6, 2002
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Contact David Bruns,
Conservation Education Consultant,
at (636) 458-2236
for reservations.



The Outdoor Teacher Education Resource Center

(for teachers, youth leaders and
homeschoolers)

Hours:

Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

(closed 11:00 - Noon for lunch)

1926 S. 12th St.
St. Louis, MO 63104
(314) 231-3803



BUSCH RANGE

Hours for February 2002:

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Friday - Tuesday
Closed Wednesday & Thursday

For more information,
call 636.441.4554 ext. 251

HENGES RANGE

Hours for February 2002:

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Wednesday - Sunday
Closed Monday & Tuesday,
Special Events & Holidays
For more information,
call 636.938.9548

News from
August A. **Busch** Memorial Conservation Area

Weather Lore

by Shanna Raeker, Naturalist

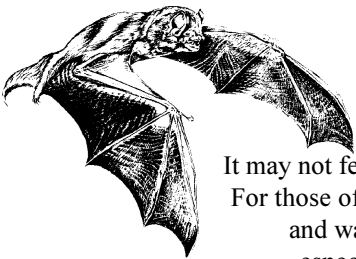
Every February, people anxiously await the groundhog's endeavor. Will he see his shadow and curse us with six more weeks of winter, or will he predict an early spring? Most people don't put much stock into whether or not the groundhog sees his shadow, but don't be too quick to judge other weather sayings. Although much weather lore is fictitious, some has an element of truth.



Weather lore is most accurate when it applies to short-range local weather. When a weatherman makes a forecast, he is predicting the weather for a large geographic area for several hours at a time. It only makes sense that the weather will change over time and make this forecast inaccurate. Weather lore that uses the current conditions at a specific location to predict the weather should be more accurate.

Most weather lore can be easily identified as fact or fiction by determining if it makes logical sense. For example, one weather saying states that a silver maple shows the lining of its leaves before a storm. If you think about what happens before a storm, you realize that this saying could hold true. Before a storm comes, the wind usually starts blowing stronger which in turn makes the leaves of many trees show their underside. In contrast, there is no reasonable explanation for a groundhog predicting a longer winter merely because he saw his shadow.

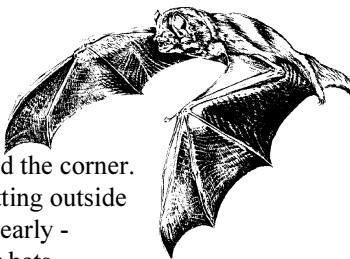
Even the most logical weather sayings can fail. After all, if we could truly predict the future we'd be rich and famous. Either way it's still fun to keep track to see if the predictions come true. So what do you think will come from Punxsutawney Phil's forecast this year?



Going Batty for Spring

by Lia Frey, Wildlife Biologist

It may not feel like it yet, but spring is just around the corner. For those of you who are looking forward to getting outside and watching wildlife, February is not too early - especially if you happen to be looking for bats.



You may not know it, but Missouri is home to 14 different kinds (or species) of bats. Bats are mammals and share characteristics common to other mammals such as teeth, fur, and milk or mammary glands. All of the bats in Missouri eat insects that they catch in mid-air. Through examination of bat droppings, the kinds of insects the bats are eating can be identified. Some bats are picky about what they eat and may eat mostly one kind of insect, but many will eat one or more of the following insects: mayflies, mosquitoes, beetles, caddis flies, lace-winged flies, moths, leafhoppers, houseflies, cicadas, flying ants, weevils, dragonflies and wasps. The amount of insects consumed by bats is surprisingly significant and therefore bats play a very important role in controlling populations of night flying insects. For example, one little brown bat can eat more than 1,000 mosquito-sized insects in an hour!

In late fall when flying insects are less abundant, the bats must either hibernate or migrate. Most choose to hibernate in caves, mines, hollows of trees, buildings or deep within the crevices of cliffs. A few of our Missouri species migrate to locations where insects are again plentiful. No matter which strategy they use for surviving a Missouri winter, they all return or emerge in early spring and raise their young here. So, from as early as February and all through the summer and fall months, bats can be seen flying in areas where insects are abundant. Happy viewing!



**2360 Highway D
St. Charles, MO
63304
(636) 441 - 4554**

LOCATION:

From Hwy 40, take 94 south to Hwy D; turn west on D for approx. 1 mile.
From I-70, take 94/First Capitol exit; turn south on Hwy 94 to Hwy D; turn west on D for approx. 1 mile. The area entrance is on the north side of Hwy D.

HOURS:

Area is open from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. See area regulations for special hunt hours. Fishing hours are from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. Rental boats are available April 1 through September 30. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. It is closed some state holidays.

ABOUT THE AREA:

6,987 acres with 32 lakes and 40 ponds totaling 526 acres of water for fishing. There are six viewing blinds (two are wheelchair accessible), seven hiking trails totaling 5 miles, picnic area, staffed firearms range, and fishing jetties (some are wheelchair accessible). The area has interpretive programs, exhibits, demonstration sites and is used by bicyclists.

News from
Rockwoods Reservation

If you're like me warmer days could not come any sooner, battling bouts of cabin fever, and starting to think Jimmy Buffet had the right idea with the improvements of the freezer. Relish in the knowledge that February sun brings warmer days and for a few short weeks that sun brings magic to your own backyard!! Maple Sugar Magic, that is!

Find that gorgeous maple tree in your backyard, the one that is so nicely shaped. Please choose a tree in your own backyard or ask the owner of the property before tapping. Remember, you should always ask before tapping trees in parks or conservation areas. Choose a tree that is at least 6 inches diameter; if you tap one smaller than that you will take

collect on warm days. Treat collected sap like milk. When you start the boiling down process there are a few things to keep in mind. Maple sap is about 3 percent sugar, meaning for every 40 gallons of sap you will get 1 gallon of syrup. When you boil that sap down there will be lots of water vapor! You may want to try boiling it down outside at first to save that wallpaper in your kitchen not to mention saving yourself from cleaning the mess! Syrup will be formed when the boiling sap starts to thicken and reaches a temperature of 7 degrees above boiling water. Once you have enough sap for the year or the season is over, simply pull the spouts out of the tree. The tree will heal itself in about one or two years.

**Backyard Magic
in February**

by Keri Lanning, Naturalist

away too much sap from the tree and end up stunting the growth or possibly killing it. Using a 7/16" bit, drill a hole about 2-1/2" into the bark. Drill at a slightly uphill angle so the sap easily drips out. You can either buy a spout or make your own out of a whittled down 1/2" dowel with a hole drilled down the center. Then attach a bucket to the tree to collect sap. You can use a milk jug, coffee can, or be fancy and buy a real maple sap bucket.

Collect the sap daily, you'll be surprised how much you



Maple Sugar Festival

Saturday, February 16, 2002

10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.



Rockwoods Reservation is inviting you and your family to take part in an old Missouri tradition - Maple Sugaring! This free event will begin in the Education Center where you will learn about some of the history behind this tradition. Then bundle up because we will be heading out to our sugar bush to collect some maple sap! Along the way learn to identify a maple tree by its buds and unlock some of the mystery behind why the maple sap is flowing. Stop by the Sugaring Shed and watch sap boil down into some tasty syrup!

Parking for this event will be at LaSalle Springs Middle School parking lot (located on Highway 109) and a shuttle will bring you to the Education Center. This special event is made up of multiple stations, the first beginning in our classroom. For more information, call (636) 458-2236.

Note: In case of severe weather, this program will be cancelled.



**2751 Glencoe Road
Wildwood, MO 63038
(636) 458 - 2236**

LOCATION:

From I-44, take Hwy 109 (Eureka exit) north 4 miles to Woods Avenue; left on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs.
From Hwy 40 (I-64), take Clarkson Road south to Manchester Road; right (west) on Manchester to Hwy 109; left (south) on Highway 109, 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs.
From Manchester Road, take Hwy 109 south 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, and immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs.

AREA HOURS:

Sunrise until 1/2 hour after sunset.

**VISITOR CENTER
HOURS:**

Open seven days a week all year, except holidays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ABOUT THE AREA:

All facilities are free to the public including:

*Education Center with exhibits and interpretive programs.

*1,898 acres of rugged, mostly hardwood forested land interspersed with springs and streams.

*Two picnic areas (one with charcoal grills) with drinking water, tables, and toilets.

*Seven trails (one is self-guided and wheelchair accessible) totaling more than 10 miles.

